



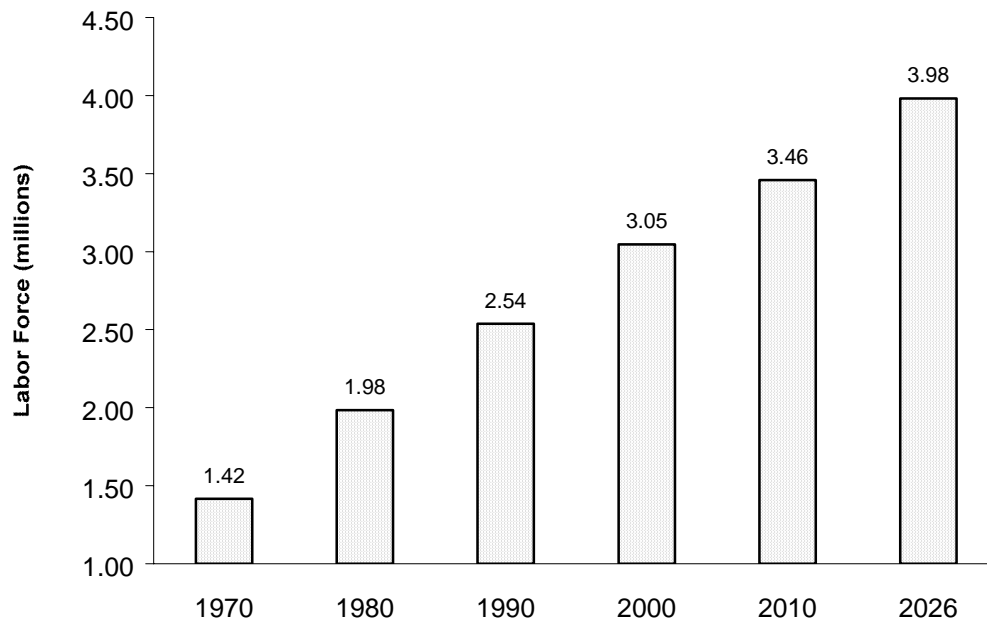
## CHAPTER 2

# Long-Term Forecast Of the Washington Labor Force

**B**ETWEEN 1970 AND 2001, total labor force\* in Washington more than doubled from 1.41 million to 3.1 million. The state is expected to gain an additional one million workers in the following 25 years and, by the year 2026, have a workforce of 4.0 million. The forecast represents a 1.1 percent average annual growth rate for the state labor force from 2001 to 2026, less than half the pace of the 2.6 percent annual growth in the past three decades.

In the first half of the 1990s, labor force in the state grew 2.1 percent per year. The growth accelerated to a 2.6 percent annual rate in the 1995-98 period, but then barely increased in the next three years. The forecast for the next five years, from 2001 to 2006, calls for a moderate recovery of annual growth to 1.4 percent.

**Figure 2-1  
Washington Labor Force Growth**



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\*As used in this report, the term "labor force" refers to the *civilian non-institutional labor force*, which is composed of individuals age 16 or over who are currently employed (either part-time or full-time) or who are actively seeking employment. Individuals who are in nursing homes, prison, or the military (referred to as the institutional population) are not considered to be either in the civilian labor force or part of the base population from which the labor force is drawn. Other individuals who are not in the civilian labor force are those who are not employed *and* not seeking employment. Common reasons for not being in the labor force include retirement, ill health or injury, attending school, or doing housework at home.

In the next 25 years, Washington's labor force growth will decelerate. The state's workforce is expected to increase at a 1.4 percent annual rate from 2001 to 2010, after which the growth rate will decline considerably to an annual average of 0.9 percent between 2010 and 2026.

The slowdown in labor force growth is a national phenomenon related to the aging of the population. Since labor is a critical factor of production, the slowdown in labor force growth will dampen the growth of economy. This is a particularly important concern because, after 2010, the baby boom generation will start entering retirement en masse and drawing Social Security and Medicare benefits. The quickly growing retiree and elderly population will have to be supported by a labor force that increases relatively slowly. Besides the ongoing Social Security reform efforts, it is anticipated that future productivity increases will accelerate to offset the drag exerted by the slowing labor force growth.

The most demanded labor skills in the future will be those required by growth industries such as information processing and telecommunication, automated tools and equipment, and knowledge-based service businesses. In addition, as the economy becomes more dynamic, future labor market participants need to be able to promptly adapt to the quick-changing working environment. Also, as firms constantly restructure to improve operating efficiency and market competitiveness, future workers should anticipate job changes many times in their careers.

On the other hand, there will be increasing demand for "local services" that produce job opportunities for low- or moderate-skilled workers. Demand for these services will be stimulated by an increasing number of multi-earner households and the aging of the baby boomers. These services are much less susceptible to the competition of foreign imports.

The future labor force will be more diversified. In 2026, non-white workers will account for 15.4 percent of total labor force in Washington, compared to the 8.5 percent share in 1990. By 2026, 16.3 percent of the state's workforce will be Hispanic, more than four folds the 3.7 percent share in 1990. In addition, over the next two-and-a-half decades, female labor force in the state will increase 33.1 percent, compared to the 27.8 percent growth for male workers.

The size and composition of the Washington labor force is determined by three major factors:

- (1) Natural population changes – aging, births, and deaths.
- (2) Net-migration – difference in the number of persons entering and leaving the state.
- (3) Labor force participation rates – proportion of people 16 years of age and older who are employed or seeking employment.

The following sections explore the future changes of these factors and their implications in shaping the state's workforce.

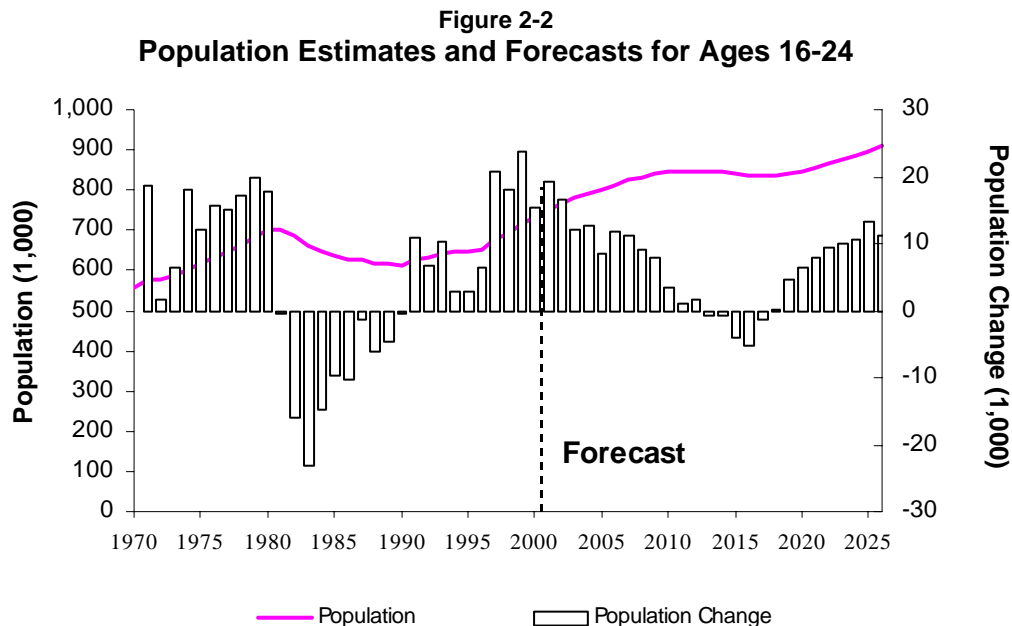
## Population Change and Labor Force Growth

Population growth in the state directly contributes to its labor pool. From 1970 to 2001, the number of persons 16 years old and over grew at an annual rate of 2.2 percent in Washington, significantly higher than the 1.3 percent annual rate for the nation. As a result, the state's labor force grew 2.6 percent per year between 1970 and 2001, far outpacing the 1.8 percent average growth rate for the U.S. during the same period.

Population growth in the state is expected to slow to 1.2 percent per year between 2001 and 2026; similar growth rate is projected for the Washington labor force during the period. The forecasted growth for the state's labor force is still much higher than the projected 0.8 percent annual increase for the nation as a whole.

People in the 16 to 24 age group account for a majority of new labor market entrants. In Washington State, high growth of youth population in the late 1990s will lead to significant additions of new workers to the state's labor pool in the near term. The state's population in this age cohort actually declined throughout the decade of the 1980s (Figure 2-2), due to lower birth rates beginning in the mid-1960s. Consequently, in 1990 this age group accounted for only 16.6 percent of the state labor force, substantially lower than the 35.0 percent share in 1980.

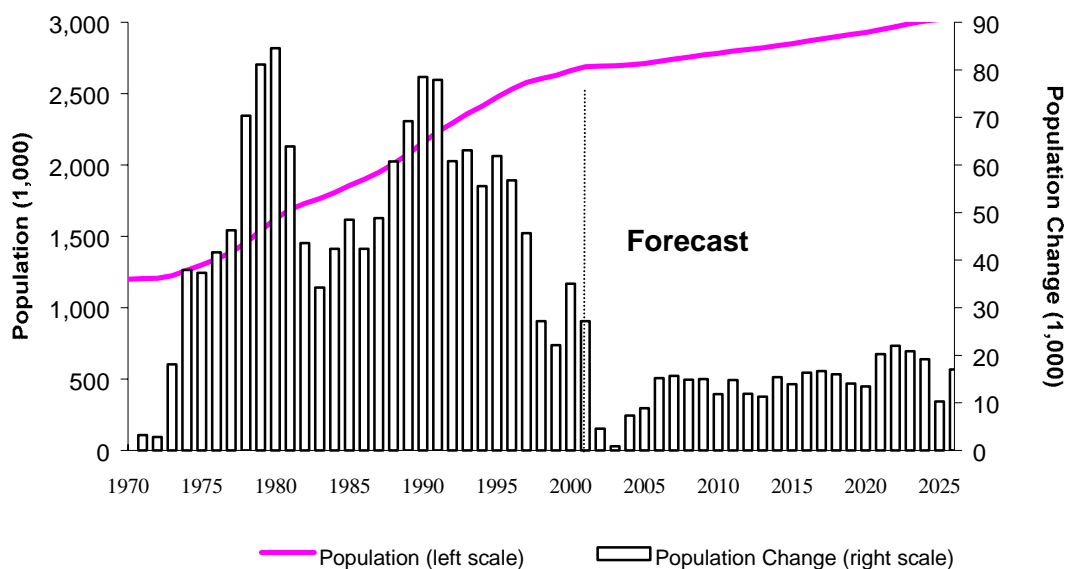
Starting in the early 1990s, the 16-24 population began to grow again, although very slowly. Population growth in this age group accelerated in the second half of the 1990s and, by the turn of the century, approached the high growth reached in the 1970s. Growth of this age group in the state will once again start declining in the second half of the 2000s.



Shifting age structure is a major factor leading to the anticipated slowdown in the growth of the Washington labor force. In the next 25 years, a large portion of the projected population growth will occur in the age groups with low labor force participation rates, thus depressing total labor force participation and workforce growth. The state's 25 to 54 year old population, the most active labor force participants, grew an average of 2.6 percent, or 48,000 persons, per year between 1970 and 2001. In contrast, population growth in this age group will drop substantially to an annual average of 13,900 persons over the forecast period.

The forecast shows that annual growth rate of the 25 to 54 age group in the state will drop to 0.5 percent over the next two-and-a-half decades, far below the growth rates of 2.9 percent and 2.0 percent per year in the 1980s and the 1990s, respectively (Figure 2-3).

**Figure 2-3**  
**Population Estimates and Forecasts for Ages 25-54**



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## Migration

Migration affects the labor force in two ways: first, it is an important contributor to population change, and thus labor force growth; second, most of the migrants are young workers with a long-term attachment to the labor force. In the past 25 years, net migration in the state averaged 48,100 per year, directly accounting for about 60 percent of state yearly population growth. Over the forecast horizon, net migration is expected to remain at a level compatible with historical average, due mainly to continued strengths in the state's manufacturing and other traded sector jobs:

- Manufacturing employment in Washington is projected to grow slightly, compared to the forecasted decline in the U.S. Manufacturing jobs offer above-average wages and support a variety of other jobs in the economy. Strength in the state's manufacturing sector will help stimulate the demand for labor and thus labor-related in-migration.
- Business services will continue to grow at a healthy pace, although not at the same rapid rate as in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Most of the fast-growing business services industries recruit from national or international labor pools; thus, their growth is expected to attract labor from outside the state.
- There have been an increasing number of migrants over age 65 to Washington. Migration decisions of senior citizens are mainly determined by quality of life, amenities, and services available at the destination places. Senior migrants affect the state labor market differently than job-related migrants. On one hand, they are not competing for job opportunities; on the other hand, their assets and incomes contribute to the local economy and the demand for labor. Senior citizens are intensive users of public and private services, thus stimulating employment growth in these sectors. Nationwide, the proportion of total population that is retired or over age 65 is expected to increase significantly throughout the forecast period, suggesting that a growing portion of in-migrants will be retired or over age 65.

As a result of the aforementioned economic and non-economic forces, net-migration between 2001 and 2026 will total 1.11 million persons, averaging about 44,400 per year, slightly below the 49,600 annual average of the past 30 years.

## Changes in Labor Force Participation

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Labor force participation rates in Washington State historically have been higher than the national average, due in large part to a higher concentration of young people who are active labor market participants. From 1970 to 2001, the state's aggregate labor force participation rate increased from 61.5 percent to 68.3 percent. During this period, the male labor force participation rate gradually declined, while the female labor force participation rate rose considerably. By 2026, the labor force participation rate in the state is projected to decline to 64.0 percent. Most of the drop will take place after 2010.

The projected decline in labor force participation is due mainly to changes in age composition of the future population. Basically, for both males and females, labor force participation is highest between the ages of 20 and 54; it is somewhat lower for ages 16 to 19 and ages 55 to 64, and is very low for persons in retirement age of 65 and over. Population growth that occurs in age groups with lower labor force participation (e.g., age 65 and over) will not increase the labor force as much as the growth in the high-participation age groups (e.g., age 35 to 44). The changing age structure over time is a major factor that lowers the aggregate labor force participation rate after 2010.

From 2010 to 2026, the proportion of the state population in the older age groups will increase substantially. The elderly people (age 65+) as a share of the total state population will increase from 12.1 percent in 2010 to 18.5 percent in 2026. This has a dampening effect on the labor

force growth since the elderly have much lower labor force participation rates. If the year 2026 population was assumed to have the same age structure as in 2010, the aggregate labor force participation rate for that year would be 69.9 percent, rather than the projected 64.0 percent. In other words, aging of the population alone depresses the state labor force participation rate by 5.9 percentage points.

Table 2-1 shows a comparison of the 1990 Washington labor force and labor force participation rates by age and sex, with the corresponding forecast for 2026.

**Table 2-1**  
**Washington Labor Force by Age and Sex, 1990 and 2026**

Age	Labor Force				Labor Force Participation Rate		
	1990	2026	1990-2026 Net Additions	Percent Change	1990	2026	1990-2026 Percentage Pt. Difference
<i><b>All</b></i>							
16-24	422,120	610,503	188,383	44.6%	71.7%	69.1%	-2.6
25-54	1,844,185	2,611,986	767,801	41.6%	86.6%	87.3%	0.7
55-64	213,746	553,119	339,373	158.8%	56.4%	59.9%	3.5
65+	57,404	205,406	148,003	257.8%	10.5%	14.4%	3.9
Total	2,537,454	3,981,014	1,443,559	56.9%	69.7%	64.0%	-5.7
<i><b>Male</b></i>							
16-24	214,839	303,271	88,433	41.2%	73.5%	68.9%	-4.6
25-54	1,005,140	1,378,674	373,535	37.2%	95.4%	91.6%	-3.8
55-64	124,323	296,821	172,497	138.7%	67.5%	64.4%	-3.1
65+	33,798	123,036	89,238	264.0%	14.5%	18.8%	4.3
Total Male	1,378,099	2,101,802	723,703	52.5%	78.1%	68.7%	-9.5
<i><b>Female</b></i>							
16-24	207,282	307,232	99,950	48.2%	69.9%	69.3%	-0.6
25-54	839,045	1,233,312	394,267	47.0%	78.1%	83.0%	4.9
55-64	89,423	256,298	166,875	186.6%	45.8%	55.4%	9.6
65+	23,606	82,370	58,764	248.9%	7.6%	10.7%	3.1
Total Female	1,159,355	1,879,212	719,856	62.1%	61.8%	59.5%	-2.3

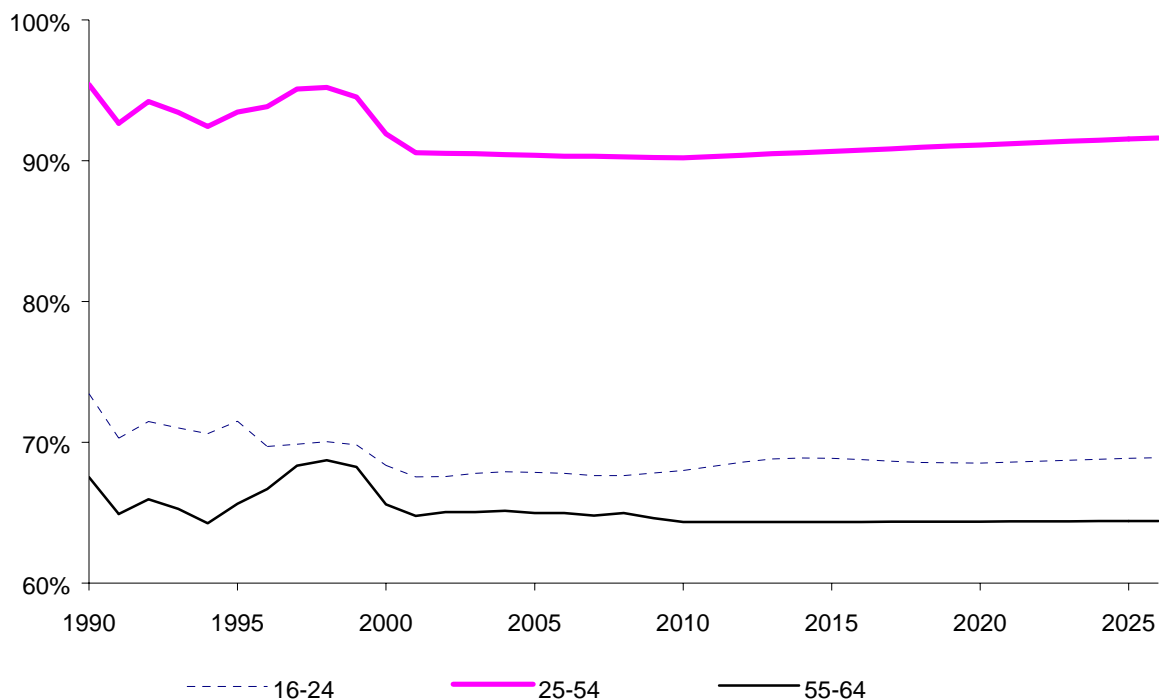
### Male Labor Force Participation

The total male labor force participation rate has declined slightly in the past two decades, due primarily to early retirements. Improved retirement options have led to a decline in the labor force participation rates of older men. Generous public and private pension systems and social insurance programs (Social Security, Medicare, and employer-provided health insurance), as well as increases in the wealth and asset incomes of senior citizens have been the contributing factors for choosing early retirement. Nationally, the labor force participation rate of males age 55 to 64 years old dropped from 83.0 percent in 1970 to 67.4 percent in 2001.

In the future, many people over age 65, especially those in the 65-70 age group, will choose to stay in the workforce longer because they lack the economic resources necessary to maintain a desired life style. This is especially the case considering possible retrenchments in Social Security and Medicare benefits. A longer life expectancy also contributes to the need to extend working years. These assumptions have been taken into account in the present labor force forecasts for the state.

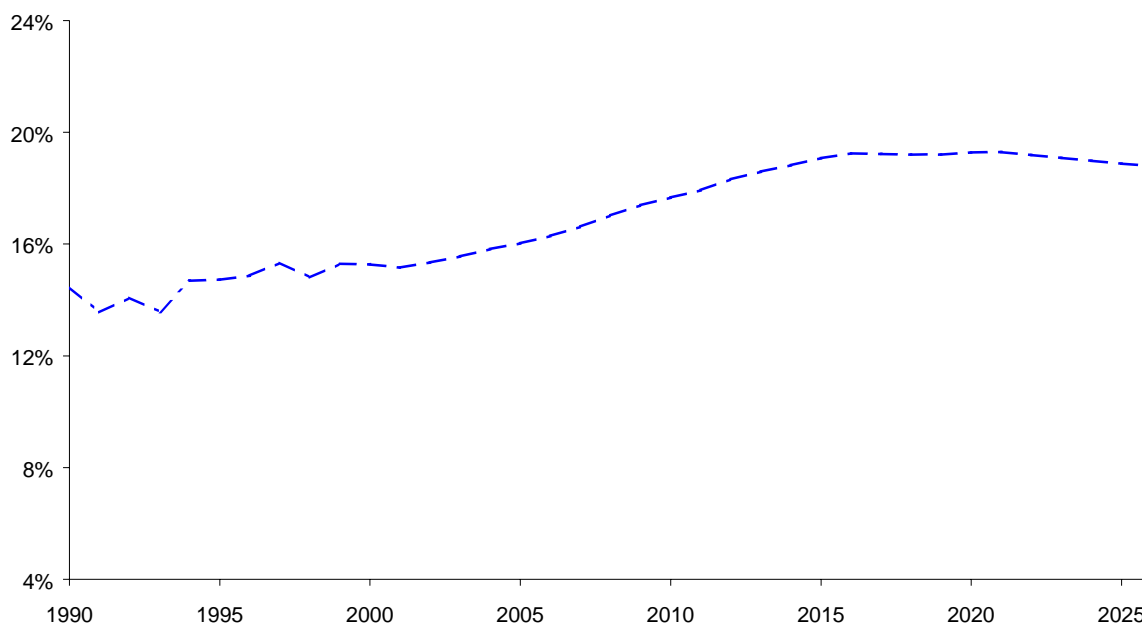
Still, the male labor force participation rate of those in the age of 55-64 is projected to decline from 67.5 percent in 1990 to 64.4 percent by 2026 (Figure 2-4a). The changing racial mix of the labor force – i.e., a higher proportion of the male population will be non-whites with lower labor market attachment – has some negative effect on the aggregate male labor force participation rate.

**Figure 2-4a**  
**Washington Male Labor Force Participation Rates (Age 16-64)**



Educational attainment is another important reason why an increase in the labor force participation rate of those over age 65 is anticipated (Figure 2-4b). Table 2-2 shows that education achievement is a very significant factor in determining the working status of the elderly. Since people in the 35 to 39 age group in 1990 are three decades removed from the 65 to 69 age cohort in 2020, their educational profile provides a close approximation to the educational achievement of those age 65 to 69 in 2020. Table 2-2 shows that in the future elderly people will have much higher educational levels than those in the same age group in 1990, suggesting a higher labor force participation rate.

**Figure 2-4b**  
**Washington Male Labor Force Participation Rate (Age 65+)**



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Higher educational levels make it easier for older persons to stay in the labor force. Well-educated persons are more likely to remain in white-collar jobs that have less demand for physical strength, better compensation, and more flexible working schedules than those less educated.

Business cycles also exert significant influence on labor force participation behavior. The male labor force participation rate was affected more than the female rate by the 1990-91 national recession. The downsizing and cost-cutting operations in many large corporations in the early 1990s caused some people to drop out of the labor market entirely and discouraged others from entering the labor market.



Table 2-2  
**Elderly Labor Force Participation and Education: Washington, 1990**

<b>Schooling Completed</b>	<b>Age 65-69 Labor Force Participation Rate</b>	<b>Share of Age 65-69 Population</b>	<b>Share of Age 35-39 Population</b>
1-9 grades	11.1%	11.9%	3.1%
10-12 grades	14.0%	13.4%	5.1%
High school graduate	16.4%	34.2%	23.7%
Some college/Associate	22.5%	24.7%	39.6%
BA and higher	27.4%	15.7%	28.5%
Total	18.7%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: 1990 Census PUMS data file.

### Female Labor Force Participation

One of the most significant labor market phenomena in the twentieth century is the increase of women in the workforce. Nationwide, the female labor force participation rate increased from 33.8 percent in 1950 to 57.5 percent in 1990, then reached 60.9 percent in 2001. As a result, the gap between male and female labor force participation rates has narrowed substantially over the past four decades. In 1950, the male labor force participation rate was 53 percentage points above the female rate; by 2001, the gap shrank to 14 percentage points.

Key factors contributing to the trend of rising female labor force participation include increasing levels of education, decisions to delay marriage and childbearing, changing gender roles, availability of market substitutes for housework, and changing technologies that reduce the demand for physical labor. Declining real wages through the past three decades also have contributed: in many households, a second income was needed when the real earnings from the male householders declined.

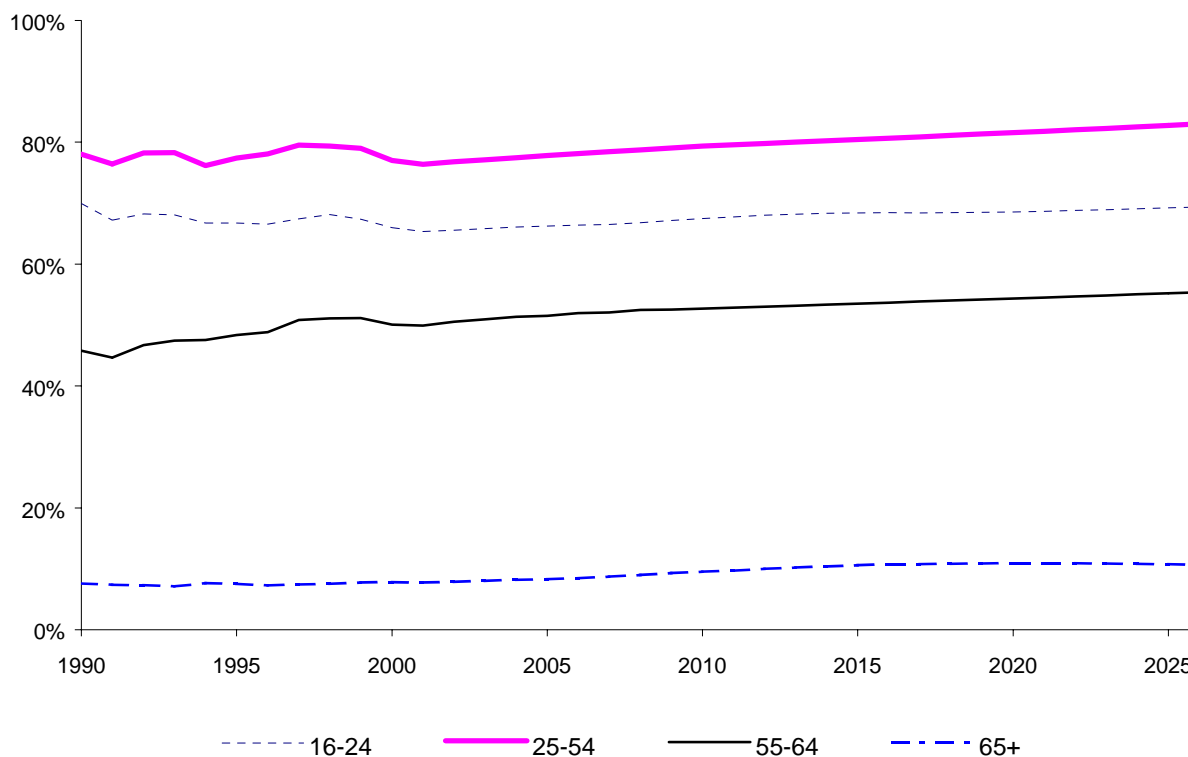
The shifting of female roles from an emphasis on house-keeping to paid jobs outside the home will continue to bring more women into the labor force. Continuing progress in obtaining formal education certainly is going to increase female participation in the labor market. Economic pressures will also continue to drive women into the market workforce, especially for single mothers.

Indeed, the general orientation toward work and overall attachment to the labor force are already roughly comparable for younger men and women. Furthermore, as the demographic forces result in slower labor force growth in the next few decades, employers will increasingly look to women as an important source of labor.

On the other hand, although the long-term trend of rising female participation in the labor force is expected to continue, the increase will slow down. Actually, the pace of increase in female labor force participation began to slow considerably in the mid-1980s as the female rates approached those of males. Gender differences still persist between men and women in terms of

perceived parenting and other family responsibilities. Numerous studies have found that women still bear a disproportionate share of childrearing and housework responsibilities in most families. As a result, woman workers will still experience more frequent and longer spells of time away from jobs than men. This means that female labor force participation is not likely to reach the male rates in the near future. All these considerations are incorporated in the forecast for female labor force participation rates (Figure 2-5).

**Figure 2-5**  
**Washington Female Labor Force Participation Rates**



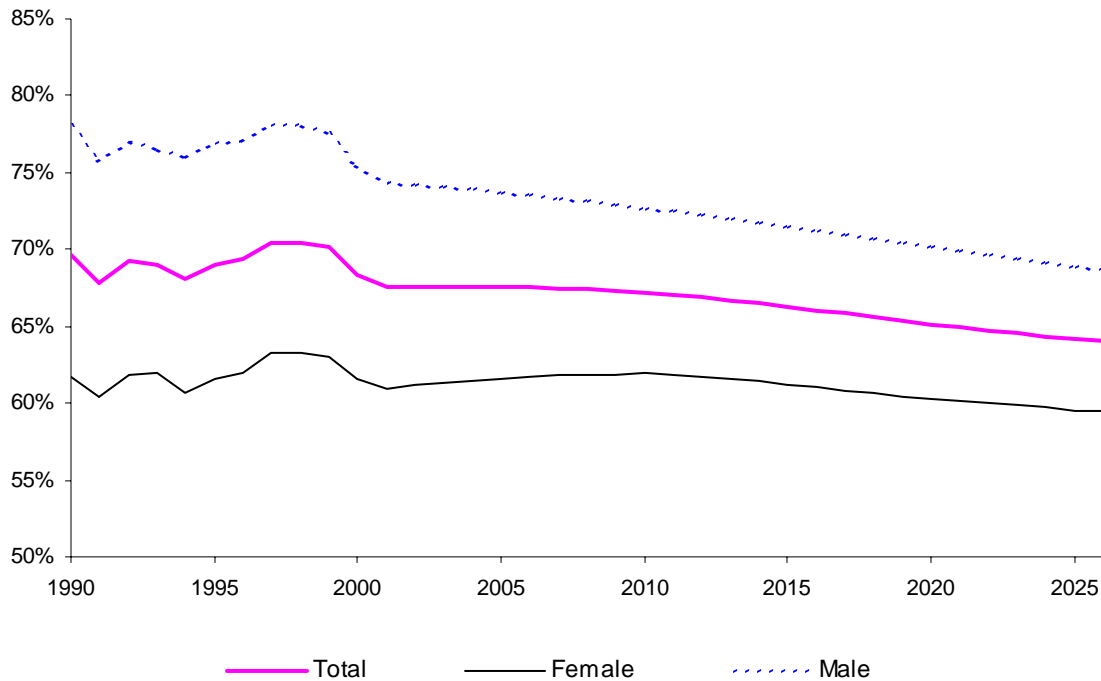
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In summary, the trend of rising female labor force participation will continue, although at a slower pace than in the previous three decades. In Washington State, the overall participation rate of women in the workforce is expected to change little from 61.8 percent in 1990 to 61.9 percent in 2010; then, as a large proportion of the population moves into the age groups with low labor attachment, the rate will decline to 59.5 percent by the year 2026.

As discussed above, changes in the male and female labor force participation rates varied by age and sex. Together, they resulted a slight decline in the state total labor force participation rate from 67.8 percent in 1991 to 67.5 percent in 2001, and then a steady decline to 64.0 percent by 2026.

Figure 2-6  
Forecast of Washington Labor Force Participation Rates by Sex



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## Forecast of Total Labor Force

The projected changes in labor force participation rates, net migration, natural population increase, and aging of the population will result in a downward trend for the state's labor force growth. Between 1990 and 2000, the Washington labor force grew by 20 percent, representing an average annual growth rate of 1.8 percent. This rate is significantly lower than the 3.0 percent growth per year experienced in the previous two decades. In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the state's labor force growth will slow to 1.3 percent per year, or 13.5 percent total growth for the decade. Looking further into the future, the state's labor force growth is expected to significantly decelerate between 2010 and 2026 as the Baby Boom generation reaches retirement age, growing at an annual rate of 0.9 percent (Table 2-3).

While the Washington labor force will increase at a relatively slow pace over the next 25 years, the growth of the U.S. labor force is expected to be even slower. The major reason for the difference between Washington and U.S. labor force growth is population growth. Between 2001 and 2026, the Washington's population 16 years old and over is forecasted to grow at an annual average rate of 1.3 percent, while the comparable population group for the nation is projected to increase only 0.9 percent per year. The difference is mainly attributed to the state's continuing ability to attract migrants.

**Table 2-3**  
**Washington Labor Force Change**

Decade	Changes in Labor Force		
	Number (1,000s)	Percent Change (%)	Average Annual Growth (%)
1950-1960	149.8	15.9	5.5
1960-1970	320.1	29.4	2.6
1970-1980	567.5	40.0	3.4
1980-1990	552.9	27.9	2.5
1990-2000	508.3	20.0	1.8
<b>Forecast</b>			
2000-2010	411.8	13.5	1.3
2010-2020	332.6	9.6	0.9
2020-2026	190.8	5.0	0.8

Washington labor force participation rates historically have been slightly above national rates, a tendency which is expected to continue. Table 2-4 provides labor force estimates for Washington between 1980 and 2001, and forecasts through 2026.

## **The Changing Profile: Aging, Female, and Non-White Workforce**

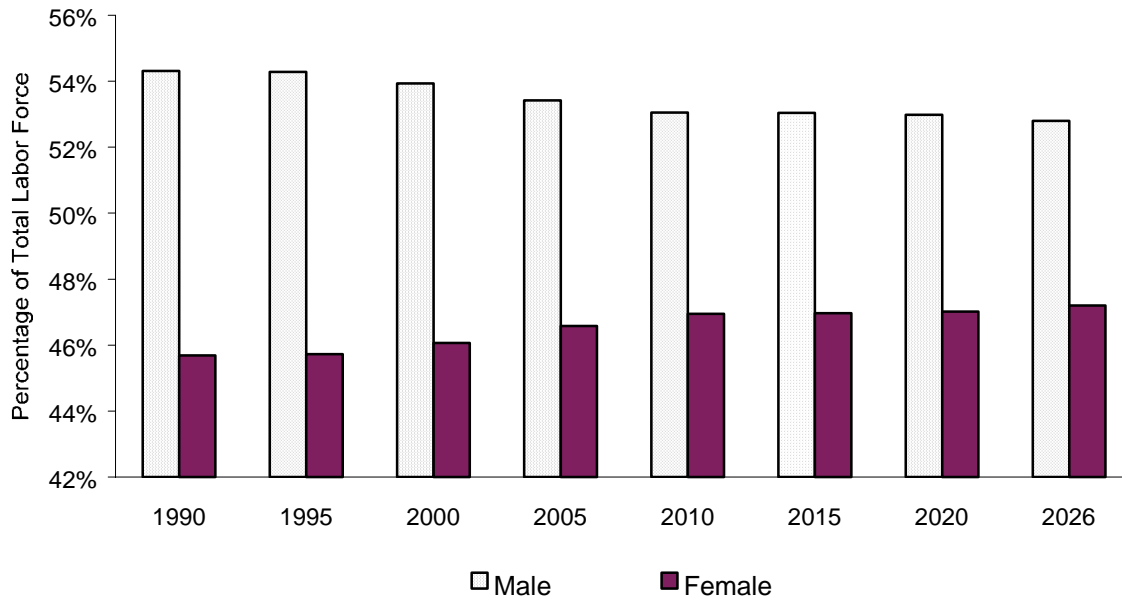
Changes in labor force participation, combined with demographic changes (births, deaths, aging, and migration), will alter the profile of the Washington labor force. The forecast shows that the state workforce will become more and more diversified in terms of age composition, sex, and racial mixes. These trends parallel those projected for the nation's workforce.

### **Higher Proportion of Women in the Labor Force**

Over the forecast period, the slow but steady increases in labor force participation by women, combined with a gradual decline in male labor force participation, will increase the female share of the total labor force. In 1990, women represented 45.7 percent of the labor force; by 2026 their share will rise to 47.2 percent (Figure 2-7). Women will comprise nearly half of "net additions" to the labor force between 1990 and 2026. "Net additions" is the difference between new entrants to the labor force and those who leave the labor force.

The increasing importance of women as a source of labor will motivate employers to provide benefit programs that accommodate the needs of female workers. Some desirable employee benefits include on-site childcare, flexible work schedules, order and delivery of household goods such as groceries, dry cleaning of clothes, etc. For employers, these work-life benefit programs will be critical to their ability to attract qualified employees, and to raising the productivity of their female workers.

Figure 2-7  
Forecast of Washington Labor Force Distribution by Sex



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### Aging of Labor Force

Between 2001 and 2026, the number of Washington workers over 55 years old will increase by about 105 percent, while those aged 16 to 54 will increase by only 19 percent (Figure 2-8). Consequently, the age profile of the state labor force in 2026 will be very different from that in 1990. Older persons (55 years old and over) are projected to represent about 19 percent of all Washington labor force in 2026, substantially higher than the 12 percent share in 2001.

As part of the aging process, the workforce will go through an interim “middle-aging” phase. Around the year 2001, middle-aged workers — those 35 to 54 years old — constituted about 50 percent of the labor force, significantly above the 45 percent share just a decade ago. A by-product of the middle aging of the labor force is generational crowding or “mid-career crunch.” The sharp rise of these middle-age workers will lead to an abundant supply of persons qualified for mid-career promotional opportunities, while prolonged staying of top-level, older workers may diminish the prospects of middle-age employees looking for career advancements. One likely result may be increasing job or career changes in the future years.

**Table 2-4**  
**Washington Labor Force: Historical and Forecast**

Year	Civilian Non-Institutional Population				Labor Force			Labor Force Participation Rate		
	Total Population	Total 16 & Over	Male 16 & Over	Female 16 & Over	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1980	4,132,200	3,061,000	1,479,700	1,581,200	1,984,600	1,157,200	827,400	64.8	78.2	52.3
1981	4,229,300	3,128,100	1,511,000	1,617,100	1,996,800	1,158,300	838,500	63.8	76.7	51.9
1982	4,276,500	3,166,500	1,530,300	1,636,100	2,024,500	1,160,700	863,700	63.9	75.8	52.8
1983	4,307,200	3,193,200	1,541,600	1,651,600	2,068,400	1,174,300	894,100	64.8	76.2	54.1
1984	4,354,100	3,234,100	1,561,100	1,672,900	2,050,400	1,169,300	881,100	63.4	74.9	52.7
1985	4,415,800	3,282,600	1,584,800	1,697,900	2,090,400	1,181,800	908,600	63.7	74.6	53.5
1986	4,462,200	3,330,300	1,608,900	1,721,400	2,198,500	1,220,700	977,800	66.0	75.9	56.8
1987	4,527,100	3,388,600	1,637,100	1,751,500	2,257,500	1,234,400	1,023,200	66.6	75.4	58.4
1988	4,616,900	3,454,300	1,667,800	1,786,500	2,315,800	1,247,100	1,068,700	67.0	74.8	59.8
1989	4,728,100	3,537,000	1,708,400	1,828,600	2,450,900	1,305,200	1,115,400	69.3	79.4	59.9
1990	4,866,700	3,640,900	1,763,600	1,877,300	2,537,500	1,378,100	1,159,400	69.7	78.1	61.8
1991	5,021,300	3,739,600	1,813,300	1,926,300	2,535,100	1,372,700	1,162,400	67.8	75.7	60.3
1992	5,141,200	3,824,500	1,856,900	1,967,700	2,648,200	1,431,700	1,216,400	69.2	77.1	61.8
1993	5,265,700	3,912,500	1,902,700	2,009,800	2,701,200	1,456,100	1,245,100	69.0	76.5	62.0
1994	5,364,300	3,988,000	1,940,700	2,047,400	2,716,400	1,474,600	1,241,800	68.1	76.0	60.7
1995	5,470,100	4,069,500	1,981,600	2,087,900	2,810,100	1,525,300	1,284,800	69.1	77.0	61.5
1996	5,567,800	4,151,100	2,022,200	2,128,900	2,878,600	1,558,900	1,319,700	69.3	77.1	62.0
1997	5,663,800	4,230,300	2,061,000	2,169,200	2,981,200	1,609,800	1,371,400	70.5	78.1	63.2
1998	5,750,000	4,308,600	2,102,100	2,206,500	3,037,200	1,641,700	1,395,500	70.5	78.1	63.2
1999	5,830,800	4,385,400	2,141,700	2,243,700	3,074,600	1,662,000	1,412,600	70.1	77.6	63.0
2000	5,894,100	4,457,000	2,176,700	2,280,200	3,045,800	1,642,800	1,403,000	68.3	75.5	61.5
2001	5,974,900	4,528,700	2,213,000	2,315,700	3,057,400	1,645,200	1,412,200	67.5	74.3	61.0
<b>Forecast</b>										
2005	6,233,345	4,779,100	2,339,300	2,439,800	3,228,100	1,724,500	1,503,600	67.5	73.7	61.6
2010	6,648,112	5,148,300	2,526,400	2,621,900	3,457,600	1,834,200	1,623,400	67.2	72.6	61.9
2015	7,096,501	5,488,200	2,697,500	2,790,700	3,637,300	1,929,100	1,708,200	66.3	71.5	61.2
2020	7,545,269	5,822,800	2,864,200	2,958,600	3,790,200	2,008,100	1,782,100	65.1	70.1	60.2
2026	8,058,527	6,221,400	3,060,600	3,160,800	3,981,000	2,101,800	1,879,200	64.0	68.7	59.5

**Notes:**

Total population is based on the November 2001 official Office of Financial Management population estimates and forecasts.

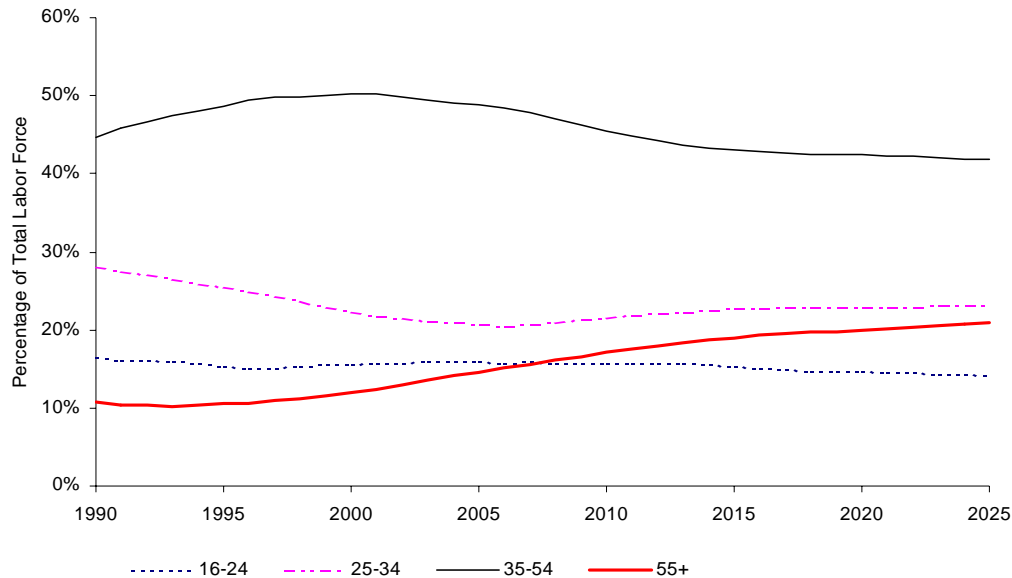
Total population estimates and forecasts are for April 1 of each year.

Estimates/forecasts of civilian non-institutional population, labor force, and labor force participation rate are "annual average" measurements.

Projection of the civilian non-institutional population is based on 1990 proportion of the male and female Washington population participating in the military or residing in prisons, nursing homes, and other institutions.

Labor force participation rates represent the proportion of the civilian non-institutional population that is employed or unemployed based on federal Bureau of Labor Statistics definitions.

**Figure 2-8**  
**Age Profile of Washington Labor Force**



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 EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT, Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch

APRIL 2002

The repercussions of the “middle-aging” phenomenon may be further exacerbated during a business downturn when firms accelerate “delaying” management structure and cost cuttings in order to remain competitive in the global economy. This is similar to what happened in the first half of the 1990s, when the flattening or compressing of management structures in firms eliminated large numbers of mid-management positions. Many of these dislocated managers were unable to find employment with compensations comparable to their previous jobs.

The elderly workforce is also characterized by a high proportion of part-time and temporary working arrangements. Today, a lot of workers age 65 and over have part-time jobs, and few of them want to switch to full-time employment. Also, a majority of the elderly workers perceive their current working as temporary, indicating their readiness to change jobs or exit the labor market (for retirement).

The aging of the workforce will present unique challenges to employers. Businesses will need management and personnel practices that can effectively accommodate older employees. Among the challenges will be: (a) establishing new reward and incentive structures as traditional hierarchical promotional opportunities decline; (b) facilitating career or job changes for “squeezed” middle-age or “topped-out” older employees; (c) planning and implementing human resource management to accommodate less predictable retirement age and exits/re-entries of elderly workers; (d) meeting varied demand for employee benefits, e.g. the elderly workers’

preference for long-term care; (e) dealing with increased pressures on retirement systems; and (f) making work more versatile and challenging.

### Non-White and Hispanic Workforce

Along with the expected increase of older workers and women in the labor force, non-whites will constitute an increasing share of the Washington labor force in the coming decades. Labor force growth rates for African Americans, Asian Americans, and other non-whites are expected to be considerably higher than the white population. From 2001 to 2026, the non-white labor force in Washington is expected to grow at an annual rate of 1.9 percent, compared to the 0.9 percent and 1.1 percent annual rates for the white and the total labor force, respectively. As a result, non-white workers will account for 25.2 percent of the net labor force growth in the state between 2001 and 2026.

Changing racial composition of the state labor force over time results in higher labor force growth rates for non-whites relative to whites. In 1980, 6.2 percent of the Washington labor force was non-white; in 1990, the share increased to 8.5 percent. Non-whites constituted 12.2 percent of the state's labor force in 2001, and are expected to account for 14.1 percent in 2010, and 15.4 percent by 2026. Table 2-5 shows the changing racial composition of the state labor force.

The main reason for an increasing share of non-whites in the labor force is that the non-white population is expected to grow at a much higher rate than the white population. A second factor is the younger age composition of the non-white population compared to whites. Non-whites are also expected to continue increasing their labor force participation rate.

Another important labor trend, in the state and nationwide, is ethnic diversification. Between 1990 and 2026, workers of Hispanic origin in the state will almost quadruple from 96,700 to 777,000. As a result, Hispanics will account for 19.5 percent of the Washington labor force by 2026, five times the share of 3.8 percent in 1990.

**Table 2-5**  
**Labor Force Composition by Race: Washington**

Year	Total Labor Force (1000s)	Share of Total Labor Force				
		White	African American	Asian & Other	Total Non-White	Hispanic
1990	2537.5	91.5%	2.7%	5.7%	8.5%	3.8%
1995	2810.1	89.3%	3.1%	7.6%	10.7%	7.1%
2000	3045.8	87.8%	3.4%	8.8%	12.2%	12.1%
2005	3228.1	86.6%	3.6%	9.8%	13.4%	14.0%
2010	3457.6	85.9%	3.8%	10.4%	14.1%	15.5%
2015	3637.3	85.3%	3.8%	10.9%	14.7%	16.9%
2020	3790.2	84.7%	3.9%	11.5%	15.3%	18.4%
2026	3981.0	84.6%	3.8%	11.6%	15.4%	19.5%



The trend toward racial and ethnic diversification poses a critical issue in the effort to elevate worker skills in the future. Today, the average education level of African American workers of every age cohort is far below their white counterparts. The gap has been narrowing, but at a slow pace. The gap for Hispanic workers is even greater. In 1990, only 56.7 percent of the Washington Hispanic population 25 years of age or older completed high school or equivalency, compared to the 85.0 percent rate for the non-Hispanic persons in the same age group. As future economic growth relies more and more on productivity improvement, raising the education levels of these fast-growing racial and ethnic minorities becomes a major policy concern.

